

Wembley dreams die in defensive disaster

**Cambridge United 3 (3)
Luton Town 1 (0)**

LUTON'S debut in the FA Trophy proved to be the briefest of dalliances with the competition as they were well beaten by Blue Square Premier rivals Cambridge United at the Abbey Stadium on Saturday, writes Mark Wood.

The game was as good as over by half time as the U's raced into a 3-0 lead with goals from Danny Crow and Chris Holroyd (2).

That may have been harsh on the Hatters, but they struggled to break down their hosts throughout and Wayne Hatswell's own goal midway through the second half was scant consolation for the Town who had had hopes of making it all the way to Wembley.

With a wealth of options at his disposal Town boss Richard Money decided to name an unchanged team from the side that thrashed League Two high-flyers Rotherham United 3-0 in their FA Cup second round replay last Tuesday.

Luton made a bright and positive start with Kevin Gallen and Adam Newton both having tame efforts easily saved early on after good build-up play.

But it was the hosts who snatched the lead out of the blue with their first real effort on six minutes. Town were caught short on the right and former Hatter Courtney Pitt was left with far too much time to drill in a cross-shot that was turned home by Crow.

Pitt threatened briefly soon after following an Alan White slip, but it was the Hatters who continued to make most of the running.

Some neat play from Luton saw them camp on the edge of Cam-



DENIED: Kevin Gallen sees his fierce shot blocked by Cambridge defenders

bridge's box on 13 minutes, but all Town could muster was a blocked Gallen effort.

An injury forced ex-U's defender Freddie Murray off the pitch on 17 minutes, but it took two more minutes to get his replacement Lewis Emanuel on the field.

Town, though, should have levelled on 26 minutes when Rossi Jarvis, Gallen and Claude Gnaka all combined to set up Newton, but the winger dragged his effort horribly wide of the near post.

And Luton paid the price for that miss as Cambridge doubled their lead on the half-hour mark. Pitt whipped in another great cross and Holroyd completely lost his struggling marker White to plant

his header home.

Stung, Luton almost hit back immediately, but White could only flick captain Kevin Nicholls' inviting free-kick over the bar.

Town proceeded to lose their way and things went from bad to worse with nine minutes of the half left when Cambridge netted their third.

Hatswell let fly from 40 yards and his heavily deflected effort fell nicely into the path of Holroyd, who was allowed to swivel and slot home from inside the box.

A terrible pass by Keith Keane fell nicely for Robbie Willmott with two minutes to go, but the lively United winger screwed his camp well wide when he should have at least hit the target.

Money rang the changes at the

interval, bringing on strikers Matthew Barnes-Homer and Tom Craddock for centre-halves White and Shane Blackett.

The second half also started at a lively pace, with Gallen having a shot well blocked after good work by Barnes-Homer.

United proceeded to break quickly, but Willmott took too long to get his shot away and was robbed by Emanuel when well placed.

Crow had a great chance to net his second on 55 minutes, but could only flick Willmott's free-kick straight at Kevin Pilkington, while Holroyd was inches away from completing his hat-trick moments later when he beat the Luton keeper to Anthony Tonkin's cross but his header drifted just wide.

Town had a great chance to get themselves back into the game on the hour when Craddock set Gallen free in the box, but Sany Potter got down well to save his low effort.

Luton grabbed a glimmer of hope on 68 minutes when the U's gifted them an own goal.

Good work by substitutes Craddock and Barnes-Homer had earned Town a free-kick on the left and the hapless Hatswell could only direct Nicholls' great free-kick past Potter.

Chances were few and far between in the closing stages as Town struggled to get within striking distance and United almost made it 4-1 with a minute left when substitute Jai Reason's cross found fellow replacement Andy Parkinson lurking at the far post, but the winger could only toe-poke wide with the goal gaping.

Newton scuffed a shot wide at the death but it made little difference as Town's dreams of a trip to Wembley came to nothing.

STAR HATTER: Tom Craddock. Enlivened a drab afternoon for Town's faithful.